Printed for the use of the Foreign Office. *April* 1889.

CONFIDENTIAL.

(5778.)

Turkey

FO 424/160

Correspondence respecting the British Postal Service between Bagdad, Bussorah, and Bombay.

No. 1.

Memorandum communicated by Rustem Pasha, May 22, 1888.

DURANT le cours de ces dernières années, le Ministère Impérial des Affaires Étrangères a plusieurs fois appelé l'attention de l'Ambassade de Sa Majesté Britannique à Constantinople sur le préjudice apporté aux droits et aux intérêts du Gouvernement Impérial par l'établissement d'un service postal Anglais permanent et régulier entre Bagdad et Bassorah, ainsi que par l'existence d'un courrier postal desservant les villes de Damas et de Bagdad par la voie du désert, les deux services fonctionnant d'une façon parallèle aux services officiels de la poste Ottomane et en concurrence avec celle-ci.

Il résulte de la dernière communication adressée par l'Ambassade de Sa Majesté Britannique à la Sublime Porte que le courrier de terre entre Bagdad et Damas a été supprimé; mais Sir William White a dit, en même temps, ne pas être compétent pour discuter la question du service entre Bagdad et Bassorah. L'Ambassade Impériale a, en conséquence, été chargé de soumettre les circonstances du point en litige à l'équitable et bienveillant examen du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté la Reine.

Le point de vue de la Sublime Porte, tel qu'il a été développé dans les communications diverses qu'elle a faites à l'Ambassade de Sa Majesté Britannique à ce sujet, peut se résumer comme il suit:

L'établissement des bureaux de poste étrangers en Turquie a toujours présenté aux yeux du Gouvernement Impérial un caractère essentiellement anormal et provisoire. Les Capitulations et les Traités ne contiennent aucune disposition sanctionnant cet état de choses. Si la Sublime Porte a jusqu'à ces derniers temps toléré l'existence des postes étrangères, cela tient à ce que son propre service postal était trop peu développé pour faire face à tous les besoins du commerce, que le Gouvernement Impérial s'est toujours appliqué à protéger de son mieux. Mais les améliorations introduites depuis quelques années dans l'organisation et le service des postes Ottomanes mettent à présent cette Administration en état de s'acquitter du service d'une façon régulière et satisfaisante, ce qui enlève leur raison d'être aux bureaux de poste étrangers. En ce qui touche particulièrement le service Anglais entre Bagdad et Bassorah, il paraît avoir pris, en ces dernières années, une extension qu'il n'avait pas eu auparavant. Indépendamment du bureau de Bagdad, une succursale a été établie à Bassorah, et un poteau a été fixé dans le bazar de cette dernière ville.

A une certaine période des négociations, l'Ambassade de Sa Majesté Britannique avait paru vouloir faire droit, dans une certaine mesure, aux justes réclamations du Gouvernement Impérial. Dans une note portant la date du 18 Janvier, 1884, son Excellence le Comte de Dufferin informait la Sublime Porte qu'il consentirait à faire cesser le transport des lettres entre Bagdad et Bassorah, et les localités intermédiaires, qui s'effectuait par le moyen des bateaux de la Compagnie Lynch, à la condition que la poste Ottomane payerait dorénavant une indemnité à cette Compagnie pour le transport de ses propres valises, et aussi que le système en vigueur à la poste Anglaise à Bagdad pour la vérification et le contrôle des paquets serait modifié. Son Excellence

consentait en même temps à supprimer la succursale de Bassorah et le poteau établi dans le Bazar.

La Sublime Porte après avoir consulté l'Administration des Postes Ottomanes, n'a pas cru pouvoir adhérer à ces propositions; parce que les conditions posées par Lord Dufferin auraient eu pour effet de la priver des avantages et des droits découlant pour elle des stipulations des Conventions Postales Internationales de Berne et de Paris conclues en 1874 et 1878, et auxquelles le Gouvernement Ottoman est Partie Contractante. D'après les Articles III et IV de cette dernière Convention, l'Administration des Postes Ottomanes a la faculté d'utiliser pour le transport de ses dépêches les paquebots ou bâtiments dépendant d'un autre pays, et il est, en outre, établi que tout parcours maritime n'excédant pas 300 milles marins ne donne lieu à aucune rémunération.

La mise en pratique de ces dispositions ne soulève aucune difficulté de la part des différentes Compagnies de navigation étrangères qui desservent les ports de Turquie. Il est vrai que dans une note subséquente, l'Ambassade de Sa Majesté Britannique a représenté que si la distance entre Bagdad et Bassorah est moindre de 300 milles à vol d'oiseau, elle surpasserait ce chiffre si l'on tient compte des sinuosités de l'Euphrate. L'Ambassade Impériale croit inutile d'insister sur cette objection, qui cesserait d'en être une, si, comme elle la suppose, le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique veut bien envisager la question d'un point de vue libéral et élevé.

Les progrès accomplis en ces derniers temps par l'Administration des Postes Ottomanes ont été considérables, et elle est aujourd'hui en situation de prendre en mains la totalité du service entre Bagdad et Bassorah, et de s'en acquitter avec régularité et promptitude. Le Gouvernement Impérial croit donc le moment opportun pour représenter de nouveau au Gouvernement Britannique l'anomalie qui résulte de l'existence d'un service de poste Anglais dans les mêmes régions, et de lui demander de la supprimer. Aujourd'hui que les circonstances sont complètement modifiées, le Gouvernement Anglais ne voudra pas maintenir indéfiniment une institution qui pouvait avoir sa raison d'être en d'autres temps, mais qui, à l'heure actuelle, se justifierait difficilement; et qui non seulement cause un préjudice notable au Trésor Ottoman, mais porte en outre atteinte aux droits régaliens du Gouvernement Impérial, droits qu'il n'a jamais aliénés, et qui subsistent, sous ce rapport, dans toute leur intégrité.

Ambassade Impériale de Turquie, Londres,
le 22 Mai, 1888.

No. 2.

Memorandum by Sir G. Dallas respecting Bagdad-Bussorah Post.

ON the 11th September, 1883, the Porte addressed a note to Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Constantinople, renewing a request which had been previously made for the discontinuance of the English Dromedary Post between Bagdad and Damascus.

This service has since been discontinued, as it did not pay.

The note went on to request the suppression of the Postal River Service, carried on between Bagdad and Bussorah by the steamers of Messrs. Lynch, on the ground that its *raison d'être* had ceased, now that the Turkish Administration had established a service which worked regularly and answered all requirements.

In reply, Mr. Wyndham pointed out that Lord Dufferin had been assured by the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs in July 1882, that the question of the suppression of the Bagdad Post and other British postal agencies would not be pressed any further.

On the 2nd December, 1883, the Porte addressed another note to Her Majesty's Embassy at Constantinople, simply renewing their request for the suppression of the aforesaid English Postal Services.

The next note is a *note verbale* from Lord Dufferin, dated the 18th January, 1884. In it he refers to a Report which he had received from the British Consul-General at Bagdad, and proposes to the Porte the abolition of the arrangements made in 1882 for the management of the Anglo-Indian letter and parcels mail at Bagdad, and a return to the old system which had prevailed from 1868 to 1882.

His Excellency then referred to a letter addressed by the Vali of Bagdad to Her

Majesty's Consul-General in August of the preceding year, which preferred the following demands :—

1. That Messrs. Lynch and Co.'s steamers should cease to carry local letters for intermediate stations between Bagdad and Bussorah.

2. That a branch British post office, which had been opened in the town of Bussorah irrespective of the post office in the British Consulate, should be closed.

3. That an iron pillar letter-box, which had been placed in one of the Bussorah bazaars, should be removed.

His Excellency, whilst refusing to admit the right of the Vali to upset arrangements which had existed for fifteen years, expressed his willingness to concede the points at issue, on the understanding that Messrs. Lynch and Co. should cease to be required to carry gratuitously the official correspondence of the Ottoman officials.

The Porte replied on the 12th April, 1884, by a flat refusal of Lord Dufferin's proposals, basing their decision on the ground that the Postal Conventions of Berne and Paris (1874 and 1878) had cancelled all previous arrangements, and given to Turkey the same postal rights and privileges as the other nations who had joined the Postal Union. They consequently demanded the suppression of all foreign post offices.

Lord Dufferin, in reply (24th April, 1884), stated that he had referred the matter home for the decision of Her Majesty's Government.

He commented, at the same time, upon the discourteous tone of the Turkish communication, and contested some points of detail which were raised in their note.

The Porte claimed that, under Articles III and IV of the Paris Convention, M. Lynch and Co. were bound to carry gratuitously all the Turkish mails from Bagdad to Bussorah, the distance being less than 300 marine miles.

Lord Dufferin pointed out that a tariff was provided for in the Convention for distances under 300 marine miles. He maintained also that, owing to the sinuosities of the river, the distance traversed by the steamers was more than 300 nautical miles, and that Messrs. Lynch would therefore be entitled to the higher rate fixed by the Convention for distances exceeding 300 miles.

The correspondence now dropped, but was resumed by the Porte in the spring of last year, when (1st May, 1887) they addressed a note to Sir W. White, stating that, as three years had elapsed since Lord Dufferin's last communication, they trusted that orders would be given for the cessation of the British Postal Service between Damascus, Bagdad, and Bussorah.

In sending this note home, Sir W. White mentioned that the English Damascus-Bagdad Desert Post had been discontinued in August 1886, but that he should not inform the Porte without instructions.

In reply, he was told that he might do so, and, consequently, in July 1887 Sir W. White informed the Porte that the Dromedary Desert Post between Bagdad and Damascus had ceased to exist, but that the postal service between Bagdad and Bussorah under contract with the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company was still maintained.

To this the Porte replied on the 27th October, 1887, by again asking for the suppression of the Bagdad-Bussorah Service. They complained that the service had assumed an organized character, and that the British Consulates at Bagdad and Bussorah were turned into regular post offices, and they claimed that the Ottoman Postal Department had made arrangements amply sufficient to meet the wants of the public.

The note was referred by Sir W. White to Colonel Tweedie at Bagdad, who, in reply, explained the origin of the British post office at that place, and expressed the opinion that it was necessary to maintain it.

Sir W. White, in sending home copies of this correspondence, observed that the Porte was acting in this matter in pursuance of the policy which it had been for some years following with a view to get rid of all foreign post offices in the Ottoman Empire.

In view of the determination of Her Majesty's Government to maintain existing British post offices in Turkey, he did not propose to enter into any discussion with the Porte, but simply to decline their request.

His action was approved.

Rustem Pasha communicated a Memorandum on the 22nd May last, renewing the Porte's request for a suppression of the British Postal Service between Bagdad and Bussorah.

The French and Austro-Hungarian Governments are resisting the endeavours of the Porte to interfere with their postal services in Turkey.

G. D.

Foreign Office, June 19, 1888.

No. 3.

India Office to Foreign Office.—(Received July 19.)

India Office, July 18, 1888.

Sir,

I AM directed by Viscount Cross to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 21st ultimo and its inclosures, requesting to be favoured with his Lordship's views as to the answer to be returned to a Memorandum of the 22nd May last from the Turkish Ambassador at this Court, pressing for the abolition of the existing British Postal Service between Bagdad and Bussorah.

Lord Cross, I am to observe, had been in hopes that the general question of the Anglo-Indian mails between Bagdad and Bussorah would not have been reopened for some time to come, as he concurs in the views expressed by the Government of India in their letter of the 20th October, 1884, that the maintenance of the present system is highly desirable. His Lordship, however, is fully sensible of the difficulties attending any refusal to take into consideration a categorical demand on the part of the Porte, which, presuming the facts are as stated by Rustem Pasha and the Ottoman authorities are in a position to set on foot and maintain an efficient Postal Service, seems to be a reasonable one.

There is no information in this Office which can enable Lord Cross to form an opinion as to the capabilities of the Turkish Postal Administration to efficiently provide for the conveyance of the mails between these two towns, as has hitherto been done by the vessels of the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company, and his Lordship presumes that on this point the British officers on the spot will in any case be consulted.

At all events, the Secretary of State for India, while hoping that it may yet be found possible to induce the Porte to withdraw their opposition to the maintenance of the existing system, would suggest for the consideration of the Marquis of Salisbury that efforts should be made to prevail upon the Ottoman Government to consent to its continuance for so long, at any rate, as the present contract with the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company remains in force. This contract, under which the Company provide a weekly mail service on an annual subsidy of 36,000 rupees from the Indian Government, expires on the 30th April, 1894, and has therefore nearly six years to run.

I have, &c.
(Signed) J. A. GODLEY.

No. 4.

Sir W. White to the Marquis of Salisbury.—(Received September .)

(No. 353.) *Therapia, September* 11, 1888.

My Lord,

WITH reference to your Lordship's despatch No. 229 of the 24th July and to previous correspondence respecting the British Postal Service between Bagdad and Bussorah, I have the honour to report that on the 29th ultimo I received a telegram from Major Talbot, stating that the Vali had requested him to cause all Indian and foreign letters to be delivered to the Turkish post offices at Bagdad and Bussorah after the 10th September.

As your Lordship is already aware, the Sublime Porte had previously been in negotiation with the Embassies at Constantinople on the general question of the carriage of mails, and had consented to a temporary arrangement terminating on the 10th instant. The arrangement had no reference to the Bagdad-Bussorah Post, but it nevertheless occurred to me that the communication from the Vali of Bagdad might be caused by some misapprehension on the part of the Ottoman postal authorities on

this point, and, pending the result of inquiries at the Sublime Porte, I telegraphed to Major Talbot suggesting this explanation.

A few days later I was able to inform Major Talbot that I had received a promise from the Grand Vizier, that the Vali would be instructed not to interfere with the existing postal arrangements without further orders, and I have since ascertained that a telegram was sent to the Vali in this sense.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. A. WHITE.

No. 5.

Sir W. White to the Marquis of Salisbury.—(Received October 22.)

(No. 410.)

My Lord, *Therapia, October* 16, 1888.

IN your despatch No. 229 of the 24th July your Lordship was good enough to transmit to me a copy of a letter from the India Office, containing certain observations on Rustem Pasha's Memorandum of the 22nd May last, pressing for the abolition of the British postal service between Bagdad and Bussorah.

I referred the question to Her Majesty's Acting Consul-General at Bagdad for his remarks on the subject, and I have now the honour to inclose a copy of an exhaustive Report which that gentleman has addressed to me.

I beg permission to reserve my own observations on this subject until I address your Lordship on the general question of the position of foreign post-offices in this country, which I have every reason to believe will very shortly be raised by the Sublime Porte.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W A. WHITE.

Inclosure 1 in No. 5.

Acting Consul-General Talbot to Sir W. White.

Sir, *Bagdad, September* 6, 1888.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt on the 26th ultimo of your Excellency's despatch of the 30th July, 1888, on the subject of a demand by the Sublime Porte for the discontinuance of the postal service between Bagdad and Busrah, and I take this opportunity to forward a copy of the communication from and to the Bagdad Government referred to in my telegram of the 29th ultimo and your Excellency's replies of the 1st and 3rd instant.

2. The facts as to the branch post-office and pillar-box at Busrah were stated in paragraphs 5 and 20 of Mr. Plowden's despatch dated the 6th December, 1883, and I need only add, in further explanation of the origin of the former, that the Consulate in which the Busrah post-office was opened on the 1st January, 1868, was at that time in the town itself, where the branch post-office remained after the transfer of the Consulate and post-office to its present position on the Shattu'l Arab, about 2 miles distant. The branch office, after existing for more than nineteen years, was closed from the 1st March, 1887, the pillar-box having been removed, as stated by Mr. Plowden, after being in use for about three years only, in October or November 1883. The only alteration in the work of the Bagdad office, equally with that at Busrah, has been the abolition of the insured parcel system during the currency of the present contract with the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company. So far then from there having been any development of postal operations at Bagdad and Busrah of late years, as contended by the Turkish Ambassador in London, their scope has been restricted.

3. The so-called postal service maintained by means of the Oman Ottoman steamers dates from August 1883 (*vide* paragraph 17 of the above-quoted despatch), and was one of the measures designed by the Bagdad Government for driving the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company off the river, which is doubtless the ulterior object of the present demand. The mails sent by it consist merely of official papers for the subordinate officials of the two vilayets. Local postage being double international rates the public entrusts its private correspondence either to friends

travelling by or to employés of the steamers, and the latter make no secret of their often carrying more than the Government mails. By the arrangement referred to in the correspondence ending with your Excellency's despatch of the 6th June, 1885, which arose, I may remark, out of the admitted irregularity of the Oman Ottoman steamers (*vide* the Vali's letter of the 25th January, 1885), the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company still continue to carry the Ottoman Government mails whenever tendered, and have done so quite recently, though not as frequently as they did. The Customs Department, however, which in some respects manages its affairs independently of the vilayet, still often avails itself of the assistance of the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company. It will be seen from the above remarks that the organisation of the Turkish river postal service is extremely lax, and does not meet the requirements either of the Government Departments or of the general public.

4. The Embassy archives probably contain a Memorandum by Dr. Bowman, sent unofficially by Colonel Tweedie to Mr. Wyndham on the 13th July, 1883, in which he described the inefficient condition and corrupt management of the Oman Ottoman steamers. For facility of reference, I append a copy of that paper. Of the steamers then forming the flotilla the "Busrah" is no longer employed, the "Telafa" was burnt four years ago, and is lying useless at Busrah. The newest of them, the "Maskeneh," of 50-horse-power, built at Trieste in 1871, is also dismantled, and said not to be worth repair. The approximate date of building, horse-power, and carrying capacity, of the four steamers now running, and compared with those of the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company, are given in the subjoined Table:—

	Date.	Horse-power.	Carrying Capacity.
Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company.			Tons.
"Medjidieh"	1883	100	400
"Khalifah"	1880	100	350
Oman Ottoman Steamers.			
"Mosul"	1866	80	190
"Phrat"	1866	50	100
"Resafa"	1866	50	100
"Baghdadi"	1859	40	30

The "Resafa," after having been under repair at Busrah for nearly a year, made her first trip to Bagdad last week, and is said to have leaked a great deal on her way up. They are manned by natives of the country: one of the commanders is a Turk, two are former Arab quartermasters of the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company, and the fourth is a Prussian, formerly an A.B. of the old "Comet." The engineers are men previously employed by the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company as engine-drivers. All alike are uncertificated, untrained men, as we understand the terms.

5. From all that I can learn, these steamers are no better found and equipped than they were described to be in 1883, since when no additions have been made to their numbers: and being even then old, and have since had five years' wear and tear. Repairs are frequently required, and chiefly from want of funds, take long in execution; as the case of the "Resafa" shows, they are often of a perfunctory nature, though doubtless costing the Government far more than the real value of the work done. No newer machinery save what has been indispensable to admit of their running at all has been supplied to them; their engines and boilers are very old and liable at any time to break down, while as little or no spare gear is kept in stock, any one of them might be incapacitated from running for months together until the necessary pieces of machinery could be procured. On several occasions the steamers have run short of fuel, when, but for the courtesy of the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company, they would have been at a standstill until they could have cut wood, if any happened to be in the district, or got up coal from Busrah. Of late coal has been supplied to them for cash or as a set-off against freight charges of equivalent value by Messrs. Gray, Mackenzie and Co., and Darby, Andrewes, and Co., of Busrah: indeed, were it not for the support of the latter firm, which has a branch at Bagdad and ships exclusively by these steamers, their difficulties in the matter of fuel would be greatly increased.

6. About three years ago the then manager, Sirri Effendi, was provided with another post, and the control was handed over to the Turkish naval authorities at

Busrah with an Agency at Bagdad. The present Commodore, Hassan Bey, does not bear the character of being an honest man, which the agent at Bagdad, Hafiz Bey, does; and the administration is probably far from pure; still, since the management has been in the hands of the naval authorities, the steamers have run more regularly than before and without many accidents or delays. This, however, is attributable both to the fact that three and often four steamers, as against the two of the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company, have been employed, and also to the state of the river, which, for the last two years, has been exceptionally good; it has still to be proved what they could do if the river fell as low as in previous years. They start every Wednesday morning, but as an instance of occasional irregularity, caused in this case by the Bairam festival, I may mention that only a fortnight ago the "Phrat," with a barge into tow, did not leave Bagdad till about 5 A.M. Friday morning, and two hours before the "Khalifah," which arrived at Busrah at 2 A.M. on Monday morning, discharged and took in cargo, and on her upward voyage met the "Phrat," which did not reach Busrah till the following Thursday. The "Mosul," "Resafa," and "Phrat" carry small cargoes, probably because there would be great risk, not only to the cargo, but to the steamer itself, if an attempt was made to load them. Consequently, whenever they have any quantity of cargo to carry up or down, they take a barge in tow, a privilege which the Ottoman Government refused to the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company.' The "Bagdadi" is only of use to tow a barge and then is very slow. Just now the Oman Ottoman steamers are carrying very little cargo up river, and make fairly good passages up, but the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company's steamers, though always full and deeply laden, generally overtake the Turkish boat leaving before them, not seldom arrive a day or two before her. In the spring, when the river was high and navigation easy, the Turkish steamers, with barges in tow, often took four or five days down and eleven or twelve days up, as against two and a-half days down and three and a-half days up, stream, taken by the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company's boats.

7. It must be obvious, I think, from the above considerations, that the Oman Ottoman steamers are quite unfit to undertake a regular mail service between Bagdad and Busrah, and that from their age and owing to the little care that has been taken of them, it is not likely that they can maintain even their present degree of efficiency for any length of time. In considering this question, however, we have to look ahead not merely to the next few years during which the present steamers may continue to run, but to the distant future and what will take their place when quite past work. For many years past the Ottoman Government has not placed a single new vessel on the river at its own expense, hoping possibly to be able to get rid of the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company and then to purchase their steamers cheap. Of late efforts have been made to float a Company, on which subject I would ask your Excellency to refer to my predecessor's despatch dated the 4th April, 1888. Numerous applications were registered at Bagdad, but the intending shareholders made it a primary condition of risking their capital that the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company's steamers should no longer run. On their representing this at Constantinople an answer is said to have been sent remarking on the difficulty of carrying that point, and urging them to subscribe without pressing it. For the present nothing further has been done here in the matter, but recent rumours point to two steamers to run between Bagdad and Mosul as a private speculation of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, being shortly dispatched. Once here they might not improbably be used to supplement the present service between Bagdad and Busrah, and the larger scheme might be again pushed forward on its becoming an object to the Ottoman Government to prove that the river service could and would be made more efficient than it is. I presume, however, that some better guarantee than this immature project affords would be required.

8. If it is decided that the Porte's request must be eventually granted, one reason for postponing compliance with it during the present contract would be the propriety of the Ottoman Government recognizing by such a Concession the services which the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company have rendered to it in these outlying provinces as postal carriers for so many years. The chief reason, however, is the impossibility of admitting that the present steamers could be depended upon with any certainty for a lengthened period to make connection with the British India Steam Navigation Company's mail-steamers at Busrah, even if a promise were given, which we should have no means of enforcing, that barges should not be towed. The bulk of the correspondence from Bagdad and Busrah is with India and other foreign ports served through India, and the ocean mail-steamers on the Persian Gulf line are bound

under heavy penalties by their contract with the Indian Government, which largely subsidizes them, to perform their voyages within a stipulated time. The question, therefore, is that of the conveyance of the mails, not merely between Bagdad and Busrah, but between Bagdad, Busrah, and India. Consequently, a better organized and equipped river service than is perhaps needed for purely local purposes might be fairly insisted upon by the other Union Administration concerned, viz., that of British India, before undertaking the transmission by sea to and from Busrah of what would become postal union, not merely its own inland correspondence. Such an organization could not be created without an expenditure of money which would for long absorb the anticipated gain to the Ottoman Treasury from the proposed change of system, and if created it would be long also before confidence in its thorough and permanent efficiency could be established.

9. The general question on which your Excellency desires my views has been so fully discussed in its various aspects by my predecessors, that I can add little to the arguments with which your Excellency is already familiar. Those advanced by Mr. Plowden in paragraph 7 of the despatch to which I have previously referred, appear to offer the best defence that can be made for the maintenance of the Bagdad and Busrah post-offices, at least as long as similar institutions are retained elsewhere in the Ottoman dominions; and local circumstances seem to warrant an effort to retain them, even if others should be given up. That the surrender of this privilege would be followed at no distant date by a refusal to allow the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company to trade on the Tigris may be taken as certain, for the Company's position rests on the same basis of usage, and if this is set aside in one instance it will be so in another, especially in a question which the Ottoman Government has so much at heart, as the withdrawal of those steamers. Our communication with India would then be at the mercy of an Administration over whose proceedings we could have no practical control, and from the sheer inefficiency of the means employed to keep it open, might be often altogether interrupted for indefinite periods. Apart from other political considerations, on which I need not dwell, his Excellency Sir E. Thornton's despatch of the 6th July, 1886, informing Colonel Tweedie that, in point of safety and certainty, the Bombay route was preferable for all but urgent correspondence, is a significant commentary on the real measure of efficiency of the Turkish postal service, and I cannot but fear that, just as has happened in the case of the desert line, by which letters for the Continent and England can no longer be sent, the Ottoman Government, after obtaining possession of this service, would introduce conditions prejudicial to its usefulness.

10. There is one point in which the substitution of a Postal Union for a British Indian service would seriously affect the interests of the British Indian subjects in Turkish Arabia, whether permanent residents or temporary visitors to the neighbouring shrines, viz., the withdrawal of the money order and parcel system. According to the information in my archives, India is not a party to the Postal Conventions on these subjects, and consequently, the means which British Indian subjects of all classes now possess of safely and cheaply remitting funds to and from India by money order would be withdrawn. Some, though less, inconvenience would result from a discontinuance of the parcel system, for the British India Steam Navigation Company will take nothing as freight at a lower charge than 5 rupees, and probably the Ottoman customs dues would also suffer to a certain extent. I feel some diffidence in making the following suggestion, as I am not sure how far it might be practicable. The Turkish Ambassador in London pleads for a liberal interpretation of the "parcours gratuit," under Article IV of the Postal Union Convention of 1878, as applied to the 500 running miles between Busrah and Bagdad. By the same Article and subsequent Regulations, the only "service extraordinaire" for which special expenses are between the Administrations interested, is the acceleration on land of the Indian mail. The ocean service to and from Busrah, however, is exclusively and largely subsidized by the Government of India, which pays the British India Steam Navigation Company an annual subsidy of nearly 4½ lakhs of rupees, distributed in proportions which I have no means of ascertaining, over seven postal lines, two of which connect Busrah with India. It might be possible, before consenting to the introduction of the international postal system, to propose a modification of Article IV, requiring Turkey to contribute towards the expense of a postal service by which her subjects so largely benefit, when the Ottoman Government might perhaps shrink from the cost, which such a proposal if carried would entail, and withdraw the present demand.

I have, &c.
(Signed) A. C. TALBOT.

Inclosure 2 in No. 5.

Mustafa Hasan Pasha to Acting Consul-General Talbot.

Sir, *Bagdad, August* 25, 1888.

THE Director of Posts and Telegraphs writes to inform me that he has been instructed by the Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs at Constantinople that from and after the 10th September (N. S.) all letters, &c., arriving from Bombay, China, and other foreign ports should be handed over to the Ottoman post-offices of the vilayets of Bagdad and Basrah, and that, with a view to the requirements of the matter being carried out, information in the above sense should be communicated to the British post-offices of Bagdad and Basrah through you.

I therefore request that effect may be given to the matter accordingly.

(Signed) MUSTAFA HASAN PASHA,
Wali of Baydad

Inclosure 3 in No. 5.

Acting Consul-General Talbot to Mustafa Hasan Pasha.

Sir, *Bagdad, August* 29, 1888.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Excellency's letter dated the 25th instant, and, in reply, to state that your Excellency will readily understand that in a matter of this sort it is not competent for me to give any instructions to the Postmasters subversive of existing arrangements without the orders of my Government.

Accept, &c.
(Signed) A. C. TALBOT.

Inclosure 4 in No. 5.

Memorandum regarding the Steamers plying between Bagdad and Basrah under the name of "Oman Ottoman" Administration.

THE Oman Ottoman Company, purely a Government concern, had its foundation in the steamers "Bagdad" and "Basrah," which, prior to 1869, were entirely used for Government purposes, viz., transfer of troops, despatches, and the subjection of the numerous Arab tribes on the Euphrates and Tigris. During Namyk Pasha's administration of the Vilayet of Bagdad, he ordered the three steamers "Mosul," "Phrat," and "Resafa" to be built at Antwerp. They arrrived here in 1869, and have since been added to by the steamers "Talafa" and "Meskenah," which complete the fleet of seven vessels.

2. Since 1869, commencing under Midhat Pasha's administration, these steamers have been chiefly used for commercial purposes; but owing to the want of proper supervision in the form of officers and engineers, they have all fallen into a state of inefficiency and disrepair. To give examples, I may point out that the "Bagdad" has been for over two months lying at Amara disabled; the "Mosul" was laid up in Basrah from August 1882 until June 1883, and the "Resafa," which has been stationary for some time at Bagdad, owing to defects in her boiler tubes, has this day, in the absence of any other available steamer, been brought down to the Customhouse to receive cargo for Basrah. As a further example, the "Meskenah" left Basrah on Sunday, the 8th instant, twenty-four hours before the English Company's steamer "Madjidiah," which latter vessel passed the Turkish steamer within twenty-four hours' steaming; in fact, owing to the inefficiency of these steamers and want of management, there is no certainty as to their arrival or departure.

3. Regarding the management of these steamers, during the time I was Acting Consul at Basrah, in 1879, they were under the direction of the Commodore of the Imperial Ottoman navy; but before and since they have been under numerous directions. At present a certain Sirri Effendi is chief manager. (In passing, I may mention this official has held various appointments in this Pashalik, one of the most important of which was that of Mutessarif of Amara, in connection with which he was suspended and imprisoned for about eighteen months, charged with misappropriation

of Government moneys. On his release he was unemployed for some time, until appointed to his present charge by the new Governor-General, Takuid Deen Pasha.) The Direction of the Company's affairs has never been really efficient, and the steamers are almost always without coal (except what they can borrow from the English Company), and have constantly left Bagdad with only sufficient wood to carry them a short distance down the river, trusting entirely to chance to take them further on. All the employés are several months' pay in arrears, and the Administration is, on the whole, in debt nearly 10,000*l.*, principally due to Messrs. Asfar and Co., of this city and Basrah, for coal supplied by the French Steam Navigation Company plying between Marseilles and Basrah. This cannot be due to absence of receipts or revenue, because during 1879 Messrs. Lynch and Co., "The Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company," tried to add to their carrying power by employing barges, to be towed with their steamers, and which barges were amply employed every voyage for some months, until stopped by order of the Sublime Porte. For over three years these barges have been employed on the Tigris, and during this time, to my personal knowledge, there has frequently occurred a serious accumulation of cargo in Basrah owing to the insufficient carrying capacity of the steamers, both Turkish and English, on the river; which clearly, in my opinion, proves that the present bankrupt state of the "Oman Ottoman" steamers is due more to maladministration, and which the above circumstances tend to show, than to want of cargo; as, since the opening of the Suez Canal, commerce between Europe and Turkish Arabia has increased to an enormous extent, and is still rapidly growing. In confirmation of this, I may mention that a firm of Bagdad Jewish merchants have recently applied for, and obtained from the Sublime Porte, a Concession to run steamers between this and Basrah under the Turkish flag; and I believe the scheme has so far advanced that the steamers were ordered to be built at Antwerp, proving that, notwithstanding the presence of the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company, in addition to the "Oman Ottoman" steamers, there is still ample employment for yet another line. And I may add that during the last few years several applications have been made to the Sublime Porte by merchants of various nationalities to secure a similar Concession.

(Signed) R. BOWMAN, *Surgeon-Major,*
Residency Surgeon, Turkish Arabia.

Bagdad, July 12, 1883.